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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 06/14/07

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ARTICLES:

(1) Outcome of Upper House election hinges on result of joint struggle; Opposition camp aims to focus on pensions

NIKKEI (NIHON KEIZAI) (Slightly abridged)
June 13, 2007

Only one month is left until the House of Councillors election on July 22. Each camp has already got preparations underway for the summer battle without waiting for the adjournment of the current Diet session. The focus of attention is on whether the ruling coalition will be able to secure a majority in the Upper House.

"We should not turn the pension issue into a political football. It

is essential for each political party to jointly make efforts to resolve public concern," Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) member Katsutoshi Kaneda said in a lecture meeting held by the New Komeito near JR Akita station on the evening of June 10. Kaneda aims to win a third term. Keeping in mind New Komeito President Akihiro Ota who was ready to take the platform for a speech next, Kaneda was paying attention to the New Komeito's policy manifesto on human life, which includes measure to deal with the shortage of doctors, in addition to the pension issue.

The suicide rate in Akita Prefecture has reached 42.7 per every 100,000 persons, registering the nation's highest record for the 12th consecutive year. Among those who commit suicide, there are many people in the prime of their working life, that is, people in their 40s or 50s. Experts say that there must be an economic factor behind their suicides. Kaneda emphasized: "Let's build a strong Akita through polite politics that gives consideration to every resident."

The Kaneda camp aims to grab organized votes in a thorough way. The LDP-candidate Kaneda has already called for the New Komeito's support. He has also secured about 500 votes from various organizations, although he won 150 from such groups in the previous election. Hosei Norota, a House of Representatives member who seceded from the LDP after opposing the postal privatization bill in 2005 and is now unaffiliated with any party, expressed support for Kaneda, saying: "Although I am not under obligation to the LDP, supporting Mr. Kaneda is another matter."

In a speech at a Akita hotel on the afternoon of June 10, Daigo Matsuura, a former announcer of a local broadcast station and an independent new-face candidate recommended by the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), devoted

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more than half of his 20-minute speech to pensions. He said: "Many citizens in Akita Prefectures have suffered losses. People waiting in long lines before the Social Insurance Agency's offices are upset."

In the previous Upper House election in 2004, Minshuto and the SDP joined hands. Also helped by a favorable wind to them due to pension reform and unpaid insurance premium problems, their candidate defeated the LDP-backed candidate. The Matsuura camp aimed to stage-manage an election focusing on pensions again. In a speech in support of Matsuura, Minshuto Acting President Naoto Kan emphasized that the outcome of the upcoming Upper House election will be an election to choose a party in power in effect, remarking: "Please give us a change to take over the political reins."

LDP member Kotaro Nogami, in an effort to secure a reelection chance, raised his voice: "I would like to devote myself for the sake of Japan and Toyama." Observers see that moves of those supportive of Lower House member Tamisuke Watanuki, People's New Party president coming from Toyama, hold the key to the outcome in the Toyama constituency. Watanuki left the LDP in 2005 after voting against the postal privatization bill.

Watanuki categorically said: "I have no intention of supporting the LDP-endorsed candidate." The LDP Toyama chapter, though, is maneuvering to dividing the Watanuki-support bloc by drawing in prefectoral assembly members close to Watanuki and to have them vote for Nogami. Watanuki held his gathering simultaneously when the LDP prefectoral chapter held a meeting. This was a test to check the prefectoral assembly members' loyalty to him. The tug-of-war is already heating up between Watanuki and the LDP prefectoral chapter.

Takashi Morita, a doctor and an independent new-face candidate recommended by Minshuto and the SDP, emphasized in a street-corner speech on the afternoon of June 10: "I would like to start my life as a politician with the task of reforming medical systems in Toyama." The Morita camp has also turned its attention to "Watanuki votes." The Morita camp established a political group calling itself "medical and welfare revitalization conference" with the Rengo Toyama and other groups, in a bid to dilute the policy imprint of

any specific political party so that Watanuki, who is opposed to cooperation with the SDP, finds it easier to extend cooperation to Morita.

Lower House member Muneaki Murai, a Minshuto Toyama prefectural branch president, said: "The total number of votes cast for the candidate backed by Minshuto and another by the SDP in the 2004 Upper House election was larger than that for the LDP candidate. If "Watanuki votes are added to this, we will be able to win the election." The success or failure of joint struggles in both the ruling and opposition camps will affect the outcome of the battles in constituencies.

(2) Ozawa-led Minshuto to focus on three points to win single seats in Upper House election

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged)
June 13, 2007

Munshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa, holding a press conference in Kanazawa City yesterday, announced that his party would field Yasuo Ichikawa for the Ishikawa electoral district

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in the upcoming House of Councillors election. The major opposition party has now completed determining its candidates for the single-seat electoral districts that number 29. The lineup of the candidates clearly reflects the innovative ideas of Ozawa, the election campaign artisan.

Name recognition

Since becoming party head, Ozawa has traveled across Japan searching for "winning horses," even while the Diet was in session. As a result, the party has managed to pick 21 Minshuto candidates and seven joint candidates for the 28 single-seat districts, excluding Oita where the prefectural chapter will effectively back an independent.

It is particularly noteworthy that of those candidates, five individuals, who failed to win seats in the 2005 House of Representatives election, will seek Upper House seats in Ishikawa, Fukui, Nara, Tottori, and Kumamoto. "Strong political foundations and name recognition are essential to win seats after a short campaign period," Ozawa explained.

Ozawa apparently picked those former Lower House lawmakers with high name recognition and organizational strength for rural areas that are traditional Liberal Democratic Party bastions even though he knew that changing hats could draw fire.

The party will again field those who unsuccessfully ran in the 2004 Upper House race in four electoral districts: Yamagata, Kagawa, Saga, and Kagoshima. In Yamagata, Kagawa, and Saga in the previous race, those candidates collected about 90% of votes to the winners backed by the ruling block.

Joining efforts

Minshuto and other opposition parties will jointly field one out of four candidates.

The party will back independent candidates with other parties, including the Social Democratic Party, in Akita, Toyama, Ehime, Miyazaki, and Okinawa, and will support the People's New Party (PNP) candidates in Gunma and Shimane. Ozawa's strategy is to join efforts with other opposition parties in electoral districts with weak Minshuto foundations in order to increase the opposition block's strength as a whole.

The problem is that the PNP might opt to join the ruling bloc after the election.

Freshness

By age, Minshuto candidates includes 12 individuals in their

forties, seven in their thirties, and three in their sixties. In contrast, LDP candidates include eight in their sixties and two in their seventies.

The LDP will field one female candidate, whereas Minshuto will back six. Minshuto is apparently focused on freshness and female voters.

(3) Hiranuma's political presence increasing

SANKEI (Page 5) (Abridged slightly)
June 14, 2007

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Former Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma, who made a political comeback in May after having been hospitalized due to a stroke late last year, has fully resumed his political activities. For instance, he launched yesterday a nonpartisan group of lawmakers who are demanding that undue photographs be removed from anti-Japanese war memorial halls in China. A book he has written, *Seiji Bushido* (Political Bushido) will be published on June 21 by the PHP Institute. Hiranuma's presence is increasing as a "conservative star."

"Establishing friendly relations with China takes mutual understanding. Looking at history correctly is essential, but we cannot allow the government to imbue people with wrong historical views."

At the group's inaugural meeting, held in the Diet building yesterday, Hiranuma spoke fervently, albeit hoarsely, for about three minutes.

On the membership list were 42 lawmakers, including Liberal Democratic Party Policy Research Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa, former Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, and the People's New Party Representative Shizuka Kamei. The group intends to thoroughly examine photographs and other items on display at anti-Japanese war memorials across China and demand anti-Japanese photos that are based on factual errors be removed.

Hiranuma, who feels that from the hospitalization, he has learned to look at things from all angles instead of just following his instincts, has decided to focus on the revitalization of conservatism.

Looking back at such events as the Diet dissolution over postal reform, the reinstatement of postal rebels, and his political comeback, Hiranuma in his book *Seiji Bushido* lambastes former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's political approach and the introduction of the US-model market economy.

A Hiranuma-led nonpartisan group of lawmakers called, "forum to build a correct Japan," and a book, *Nihon no Seidou* (Right way for Japan) coauthored by journalist Yoshiko Sakurai and Kyoto University Prof. Terumasa Nakanishi, also emphasize the importance of conservatism based on Japan's traditions, history, and culture.

Although Hiranuma is critical of the current LDP policy line, he has expressed support for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's constitutional and educational reform plans. Many LDP lawmakers are supportive of both Hiranuma and Abe. "Depending on how the upcoming Upper House election turns out, Hiranuma's moves might trigger another political realignment," a former cabinet minister said.

(4) Not possible for SDF to protect US vessels navigating far away from Japan under individual self-defense right

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
June 12, 2007

The Council for Reconstructing the Legal Base for National Security, a blue-ribbon government panel, on June 11 started to discuss four national security cases as requested by Prime Minister Abe. On the question of protecting US ships, one of the four cases, many members of the panel during the discussion yesterday called for a review of

the government's current interpretation of the Constitution banning Japan from exercising the right to collective self-defense. The panel plans to form a report after discussing three other cases, as well.

The four cases the prime minister asked the panel to examine are: (1) Self-Defense Forces (SDF) vessels carrying out joint drills with US vessels on the high seas defending the US ships should they come under attack; (2) intercepting with the missile defense (MD) system enemy ballistic missiles heading toward the United States; (3) the SDF defending troops of another country if they came under attack during international peacekeeping operations; and (4) providing logistic support that would include weapons transport.

In the session yesterday, the first case, defending US ships, was discussed with consideration given to such factors as the situation at that time and the distance from the US vessels.

For example, on the question of the repelling an attack against US warships operating in the defense of Japan, the government's position is that such would "fall under self-defense" as then Defense Agency Director-General Kazuo Tanigawa said in his Diet replies in 1983. The government believes it possible to protect US vessels by exercising the right to individual self-defense.

The discussions yesterday dealt with what Japan could do if US warships came under attack on the high seas in the event of a contingency near Japan, for instance, on the Korean Peninsula prior to any attack on Japan, or in joint exercises during peacetime. In the case of joint exercises, because each ship navigates dozens of kilometers away from another, "The comic-book case of the SDF striking back after mistakenly taking a missile attack against a US vessel nearby as an attack on the SDF itself' will not occur," noted Takushoku University Prof. Satoshi Morimoto.

Many council members shared the view that the act of Japan defending its ally's ships when Japan itself was not under attack is not justifiable unless the right to collective self-defense is used. "his case should not be handled by stretching the right to individual self-defense," one member said. They insisted on the need to review the current government's interpretation of the Constitution. One member even opined: "It's only natural to defend our ally's warships, but don't you think we also need to include other friendly nations, like Australia?"

On the other hand, as to the question of allowing the exercise of the right to collective self-defense, one member contended: "We need to discuss some kind of mechanism to avoid our country becoming involved in an unwanted war."

A certain council member argued that Japan be allowed to use the right to collective self-defense within a necessary minimum range in preparation for an unexpected contingency. He noted: "Generally, the US military will not ask for help from Japan, but the case is conceivable in which North Korea fires more missiles than the US had expected. In that case, US vessels may need to be escorted by SDF ships."

After examining similar patterns, the council plans to sort out the problem areas and produce a report. But already, calls for reviewing the current interpretation of the Constitution are arising.

(5) Commentary: Space plan fails to specify future vision

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), has released its draft long-term plan for the next 10 years. Meanwhile, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner, New Komeito, will present a space bill to the Diet next week in order for Japan to push ahead with space development as a national strategy. After the bill is enacted into law, the government will likely review its long-term plan itself.

On May 31, SAC released an outline of its draft long-term plan for Japan's space development. The government is expected to adopt it in a cabinet meeting to be held in January next year or later.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Japan's only space development entity, will pursue its goals and projects over the period of 10 fiscal years from 2008 in line with the plan. In other words, the outline is to make public what kind of space activities Japan is going to tackle over the next 10 years. However, the outline is unclear in that respect.

The outline describes something we may have to know about the space bill before it is brought before the Diet. To begin with, the outline says Japan's space development is intended for "national security," adding that Japan's space activities "purport to play a certain role in Japan's crisis management and comprehensive security setup, including measures to deal with natural calamities."

In addition, the outline also refers to "strategic technologies closely related to Japan's diplomacy and security." In this respect, the outline stresses the need for Japan to revamp its space activities in the diplomatic and security areas.

But when it comes to key projects, the outline looks like a showcase of what Japan has done in the past, showing no future vision.

For instance, the outline cites a quasi-zenith satellite system (QZSS) for global positioning. The government has now decided to launch Japan's first quasi-zenith satellite. However, Japan needs two more quasi-zenith satellites for its QZSS operation. The question is what to do about this project that has been left pending since last year. However, the outline says nothing about it. The outline also touches on lunar and other planet explorations, but it does not specify what to do about these projects. It only refers to these projects as "challenges to be studied from now on." This wording makes us feel uneasy as we see the United States, China, and India heading for the moon as their national strategies.

What lies behind that is the government's intent to leave the job to the "Space Strategy Headquarters" to be set up after the space bill is enacted into law. In the case of SAC and JAXA as well, their organizations and roles are also highly likely to be reviewed. That is why "Japan can do nothing unless the bill is enacted into law," and Japan's space development has been at a standstill since the LDP began its study of a space law in December 2005.

However, JAXA is a standalone body. JAXA therefore needs to map out
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a midterm goal and plan every five years. Its current midterm goal and plan are to terminate in March next year. That is why SAC had to create an unclear future plan failing to come up with specifics.

The LDP says the Space Strategy Headquarters should be tasked with creating such a future plan after a space law comes into effect. One of SAC's members also says the long-term space development plan is for the government to study. This SAC member added, "If there is a gap with the strategy, we will modify the plan."

Space development needs public support. However, a long-term plan that is ready to change will end up with public confusion. Whatever may be in store for the bill, SAC, as an advisory panel of experts, should earnestly come up with suggestions in concrete terms about technology development needed in the future.

Also, given the time limit for JAXA's midterm goal and plan, the governing party must have been aware of such an outcome. Japan's

space development has not made headway. This has been ascribed to bureaucratic sectionalism that stands in the way of the government's decision-making process. One of the space legislation's purposes is to rectify this under the political initiative. One of those concerned has voiced dissatisfaction, noting that the government has been belated in its decision-making and Japan has therefore been falling behind in space development. The question is how to get Japan's space development back into shape-and how to make it visible in the public eye. Politics will be put to the test of its ability.

SCHIEFFER